

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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R 300809Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6254

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 4509

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ASEAN, SN

SUBJ: JAPANESE EFFORTS TO PROMOTE DIALOGUE WITH ASEAN AND

REVIVE MEDSEA

SUMMARY: JAPAN HAS RECENTLY MADE APPROACHES TO THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS SEEKING TO ESTABLISH A DIALOGUE WITH ASEAN. THE GOJ IS ALSO SEEKING TO REVIVE THE ANNUAL MEETINGS OF THE MINISTERS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (MEDSEA) IN AN EFFORT TO ESTABLISH A FORUM WHERE THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA CAN PURSUE A DIALOGUE WITH THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS. END SUMMARY.

2. COUNSELOR OF JAPANESE EMBASSY NOGUCHI INFORMED DCM SEPTEMBER 28 THAT AFTER CONSULTING WITH THE VARIOUS JAPANESE EMBASSIES IN THE ASEAN COUNTRIES, HIS GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED TO PURSUE A GENERAL DIALOGUE WITH ASEAN. HERETOFORE, JAPAN HAD ONLY MET WITH ASEAN TO DISCUSS THE SPECIFIC PROBLEM OF JAPANESE SYNTHETIC RUBBER PRODUCTION. NOGUCHI SAID HIS EMBASSY CONSIDERED THIS MOVE TO BE PREMATURE BELIEVING THAT THE APPROACH SHOULD BE DELAYED UNTIL JAPAN'S BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE VARIOUS
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ASEAN GOVERNMENTS HAD IMPROVED. HOWEVER, HIS GOVERNMENT HAD

DECIDED TO MOVE AHEAD WITH THE EFFORT. CONSEQUENTLY AMBASSADOR HORI HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO APPROACH THE MFA SHORTLY BEFORE THE RECENT MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF ASEAN (SEE SINGAPORE 4467), AND HAD PROPOSED THAT THERE BE AN ANNUAL MEETING BETWEEN JAPAN AND ASEAN WHICH WOULD BE GENERAL IN NATURE AND NOT CONFINED TO ANY SPECIFIC TOPICS. THE GOJ HAD SUGGESTED THAT THIS DIALOGUE BE HELD AT THE LEVEL OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE ASIAN DIVISION OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ON THE JAPANESE SIDE, AND WITH THE DIRECTORS OF THE VARIOUS ASEAN SECRETARIATS OF THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS PLUS ASEAN SECRETARY GENERAL DHARSONO ON THE ASEAN SIDE. NOGUCHI SAID THAT UNDER THIS PROPOSAL THESE ANNUAL MEETINGS WOULD BE SUPPLEMENTED BY ONE OR TWO MEETINGS IN TOKYO BETWEEN THE VICE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE AMBASSADORS FROM THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS. UNFORTUNATELY, THE JAPANESE PROPOSAL CAME TOO LATE TO BE INCLUDED IN THE AGENDA OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE, BUT AMBASSADOR HORI HAD BEEN ADVISED THAT THE MATTER WOULD BE TAKEN UP AT A LATER TIME.

3. NOGUCHI SAID HIS EMBASSY HAD ALSO APPROACHED THE GOS WITH RESPECT TO REVIVING THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE MINISTERS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTHEAST ASIA (MEDSEA) WHICH JAPAN HAD PLAYED AN INSTRUMENTAL ROLE IN ORIGINATING AND FOSTERING. NOGUCHI RECALLED THAT SINGAPORE WAS TO HAVE HOSTED THE MINISTERIAL MEETING OF MEDSEA IN LATE 1975. THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF MEDSEA WAS HELD IN 1974 AND HAD INCLUDED THE MINISTERS FROM THE FORMER NON-COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS OF INDOCHINA. FOLLOWING THE COLLAPSE OF INDOCHINA IN THE SPRING OF 1975, THE RTG HAD ATTEMPTED TO CONVENE THE PREPARATORY MEETING OF SENIOR OFFICIALS OF MEDSEA IN BANGKOK IN PREPARATION FOR THE MINISTERIAL MEETING TO BE HELD LATER IN THE YEAR. HOWEVER, A NUMBER OF GOVERNMENTS INCLUDING SINGAPORE HAD DECLINED OR FAILED TO RESPOND TO THE THAI INITIATIVE AND THE SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING HAD NEVER BEEN HELD. SINGAPORE HAD NEVER TAKEN ANY ACTION TO HOLD THE MINISTERS MEETING.

4. IN APPROACHING MFA, NOGUCHI SAID HIS EMBASSY HAD ASKED WHETHER THE GOS WOULD BE INTERESTED IN THE REVIVAL OF MEDSEA IN THE EVENT THE NEW GOVERNMENTS IN INDOCHINA WERE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE. NOGUCHI SAID THAT DEPUTY SECRETARY OF MFA, TAN
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BOON SENG, HAD REACTED IN A NON-COMMITTAL MANNER AND EXPRESSED DOUBT WHETHER THE INDOCHINA GOVERNMENTS WOULD BE WILLING TO ATTEND. NOGUCHI INDICATED THAT AS PART OF THIS DIPLOMATIC EFFORT, GOJ HAD DECIDED TO TRY TO EDUCATE THE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS OF INDOCHINA AS TO THE ORIGINS AND HISTORY OF MEDSEA SO THAT THEY WOULD HAVE AN ACCURATE BASIS FOR JUDGING WHETHER IT WAS IN THEIR INTEREST TO PARTICIPATE.

5. NOGUCHI COMMENTED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZED THAT IN LIGHT OF THE CURRENT UNCERTAIN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS OF INDOCHINA AND ASEAN, IT WAS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER EITHER THE SRV OR THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS WOULD WISH TO REVIVE MEDSEA. GOJ DID NOT EXPECT EARLY RESULTS FROM THIS EFFORT AND FULLY RECOGNIZED THAT IT MIGHT EITHER FAIL OR THAT IT WOULD TAKE A LONG TIME TO REVIVE MEDSEA. HOWEVER, THE GOJ FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO THE FUTURE PEACE AND STABILITY OF THE AREA TO ESTABLISH A FORUM WHERE THE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS OF INDOCHINA CAN ENGAGE IN A DIALOGUE WITH THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS. HOLDRIDGE

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